

## Congressman Rodriguez Applauds Funding Approved by President Fulfilling Promises to American Veterans

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) applauds the President's release late yesterday of the \$3.7 billion in additional veterans funding provided by Congress - to provide the largest single funding increase in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Just last month, Congressman Rodriguez joined his colleagues in a letter urging President Bush to release these funds provided by Congress so we may keep our promise to care for our nation's veterans.

"As a Member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have fought to get full funding levels for our veterans so we can keep our promise as a nation to provide quality health care and access to veterans' services," said Congressman Rodriguez. "Our soldiers are returning home with skyrocketing numbers of undiagnosed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and other complex injuries that need attention now. On the battlefield, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind, and with this investment, we will ensure that our nation leaves no veteran behind."

"America must do better, and this historic funding increase, paired with our Wounded Warriors Act reforms, puts us on the right track for America's veterans," added Congressman Rodriguez. "After initially rejecting the \$3.7 billion for veterans that Congress added to the President's request for 2008, I applaud the President for finally agreeing with the Democratic Congress that our nation's veterans are a critical funding priority for our country."

With the release of today's funds, the 110th Congress has provided an extra \$6.7 billion over last year for the largest single funding increase in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs:

- Strengthening quality health care for 5.8 million patients, including about 263,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, in the 5th year of the war in Iraq;
- Investing in much-needed maintenance for VA health care facilities and treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury for returning veterans;
- Reducing the backlog of veterans (400,000 claims) waiting for their earned benefits by adding 1,800 claims processors.
- Building on the first steps by this Congress at the beginning of 2007 -- increasing veterans' health care and benefits by \$5.2 billion for improved care and shorter waiting lines for veterans waiting 177 days to receive their earned benefits.

Most veterans receiving VA health care are struggling to get into the middle class, with a median annual income of \$23,000.

This increase has widespread support and praise from America's leading veterans'

organizations including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Officers Association of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, AmVets, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, National Association for Uniformed Services and Disabled American Veterans.

Congressman Rodriguez serves as a Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

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